

[Ole An' Broke]

April 6, 1939

Mandy Long Roberson (Negress)

Ex-slave, housekeepers landowners County Home Inmate

County Home, Yadkinville, N.C.

Clalee Dunnagan, writer

Claude V. Dunnagan, reviser

OLE AN' BROKE Original Names Changed Names

Mandy Long Roberson Lucinda Williams

Yadkin County, N.C. Jackson County, N.C.

Yadkinville, N.C. Edgeville, N.C.

Birmingham, Ala. Atlanta, Georgia

Carbon Hill, Ala. Spruce Hill, Georgia

Lynch Family Payne Family

Long Family Larson Family C 9 - N. C. [Box 2?]

OLE AN' BROKE

Library of Congress

"Lawsy, chile, you don't know nothin' bout misery lak in dem days when we 'uz slaves. I was little den, but I recollects how de traders useter come an' buy our folks an' take 'em away an' leave us chilluns a-cryin' an' a-weepin', but it neveh done no good, they took 'em on anyhow."

Aunt Cindy was born several years before the Civil War. Her parents were owned by the Paynes, of upper Jackson County, and while Cindy was still a baby, they were sold to the Larson family who owned a large plantation near Edgeville. Later Cindy's mother and brother were sold to slave speculators and carried into the deep south. She never saw them again.

"Homey chile, I 'spec' I was well nigh onto bein' a gran'mammy when yo' was bawn. I'se seed a lot o' misery in dis worl' in my time, an' I ain't 'zactly sayin' I ain't seed no happiness.

"When de wah was ovah, us colored folks stayed on wid de Larsons fo' a spell.....dat is, dem dat was lef' stayed on. Mammy an' Joe'd done been sold down de ribber....dat's what dey called it when de spec'lators bought 'em and took 'em off, 'cause most o' de time dey got sent down to New Awleans, or Saint Louis, Dat was a long piece from Nawth C'lina, an' I ain't nevah heard from 'em since. But dat's bin a long spell, an' I can't recollect a heap of it, 'cepin what Pappy tole me when I growed up."

Cindy was thrifty and industrious, and in the course of a few years, had saved up a considerable sum of money.....money earned cooking and housekeeping for well-to-do white families. She had a prosperous uncle in Atlanta who wanted her to cook for him 2 and his family. It was while Cindy was in Greenburg, prior to her going to her uncle's in Atlanta; that she met and married Joe Goodman, a worker in a cotton brokerage warehouse. Cindy and Joe didn't get along so well.

Library of Congress

"Dat scound'el was de mos' wu'thless scamp I evah seed. We hadn't bin hitched two days when he up an' quit his job at de warehouse, an' commenced loafin' 'round de house, wid me payin' all de bills an' doin' all de work. I said to myself, 'dis won't nevah work'. When I got a letter from Uncle Robey in A'lanta, wantin' me to come an' keep house fo' 'im, I packed up my duds and lef' dat man. Uncle Robey done sent me de money to ride de train.

"I worked in Georgie 'bout fo' years at Uncle Robey's an' den I met Sam.....Sam Morrison.....he worked in a mine near A'lanta an' I reckon I sorta liked 'im soon as I knowed 'im. Anyhow, we got hitched purty soon, and figgered we'd start housekeepin' f'r ourselves. We bought a little house in Spruce's Hill.....dat's 'bout sixty mile from A'lanta. An' when we set up housekeepin' Sam nevah quit his job like dat wu'thless Joe done. He kept workin' and it wa'n't long 'fore we had some money saved up in de bank.

"We lived in dat house fo' nigh onto fifteen years, an' I was workin' all de time, mostly fo' de white folks 'round Spruce's Hill. I made a lot o' frien's in dem days mon'st de white folks. Dey respected me an' dey'd invite me to visit dere houses of a Sunday, an' whenever somebody took sick, dey'd always call me to take care of dem. 'Co'se I 'most always got mo' work dan I could do, 'cause evy'body was callin' fo' me. I recollect whenever I'd walk down de street of a Sunday, goin' to church, de white folks settin' on 3 dere po'ches'd say to me, 'What a purty dress you got on, Cindy'. Dat pleased me a heap, 'cause I sho does like to dress up purty.

"Well suh, after dat, Sam commenced gittin' keerless an' got to stayin' out at night. I reckon all men's de same. He got so he wouldn't never go to church, and 'den he got to runnin' 'round wid a bad bunch. It want long befo' I seed what was de matter. It was anudder woman. Fust thing I knowed, he'd done brung dat ole slut right into de house an' was aimin' to keep her dere. I reckon I could tolerate Sam runnin' 'round wid udder men an' gittin' drunk oncet in a while, but when he brung dat ole wench into my house, I wan't aimin' to stan' fo' dat! No suh! Dat night he was in bed sleepin' wid her an' I grabbed my

Library of Congress

clo'es an' lit out fo' Uncle Robey's in A'lanta. When I got dere, I tole 'im what happened, an' he said he's awful glad I come....an' dat dey won't no use wastin' time on a no'-count husband like dat. I got a divo'ce after dat purty quick, an' sold de house. I reckon Sam run off wid dat hussy.....just like he aimed to do all de time.

“After I come back to A'lanta, Uncle Robey took sick an' died. Den I found out he'd done willed me mos' o' his proppity. Dey was five lots an' a little farm right near town. I reckon dat's 'bout de richest I evah bin in all my life, an' it sho' made me feel awful proud to own dat much proppity at oncet.

“I reckon day ain't no fool like a ole fool. When I got all dat land, I up an' got married agin. Dis time it was Manny Watson....he was a carpenter, but after we got hitched, he nevah done no buildin' much. I reckon he figgered to live on de rent money I got from my proppity.....leastwise, dat's what he done till I commenced gittin' fed up on it, an' den, when I sees 'im wid anudder woman, I tells 'im to git. I ain't seed 'im since den.

4

“By dat time, my two youn'uns.....de ones by my fust husband.....was grown. Willie, he went an' married a gal dat'd done bin married oncet 'afo' an' already had two youn'uns o' her own. Den my little gal.....Bessie.....she took sick an' died. Dat 'most killed me 'cause I was hopin' to sen' 'er off to school somewhere.....maybe up Nawth.....I had de money.....den.

“Fo' long, I commenced gittin' de misery in my limbs. I reckon I'd been runnin' 'round too much an' gittin' ovah strained. Anyhow, de doctor said I needed some hot min'al water baths, so I got up my belongin's an' lit out fo' Min'al Springs way out in Arkansaw. I went on de train an' I rode in style, 'cause I had plenty o' money in dem days. I stopped off in Nashville in Tennysee an' bought me some mighty fine clo'es, 'cause I knowed dem people out in Arkansaw at Min'al Springs was mighty classy folks. “ I stayed out dere nigh onto fo' years, an' I feelin' awful good too, 'cause I'd been takin' dem hot water soakin's

Library of Congress

an, I reckon I was purty nigh a new woman. 'Bout dat time my money was runnin' sorta low, an' I figgered I'd been out dere long enough.' 'Co'se I still had my farm an' lots back in Georgie, but dey wan't bringin' in much rent. An' I was gittin' kinda lonesome an' homesick fo' de folks back in Nawth C'liny, so I packed up my bags an' went back home. When I got back to Jackson County, I found dat Willie had done died 'bout a week befo' I got back. Dey wa'n't nobody left but Jenny.....dat was his wife....an' her two youn'uns, an' de baby dat her an' Willie'd had. I decided to stay wid dem in Jackson on accounta I had a heap o' frien's dere, an' I could take care o' my business in A'lanta by mail 'cause I had somebody collectin' rent fo' me.

5

"I was gittin' sorta ole an' reckined I'd better make arrangements 'bout my proppity so I got me a lawyer an' we done it. My nearest kinfolks was Willie's wife an' de chillun. I made it all ovah to dem. I reckon kinfolks can be 'bout de meanest folks dey is when dey take a notion. An' dat lawyer wa'n't honest, [neither.?] When dey got through wid me, I didn't have nothin' an' dey had it all. Dat lawyer puts me in mind o' a joke I heard oncet. Somebody seen a tombstone in a graveyard dat said: 'Here lies a lawyer; a honest man'. Den he said, 'what dey mean by buryin' two folks in de same grave?' Dat crooked lawyer sho' skint me. I didn't want to live wid dem no longer, so I took what little I had and come to de po'house an' I been here evah since.

"Dey treats me nice here, nicer dan dey would at home. I gits all I wants to eat, an' when it's cold, dey always builds me a fire in my room. 'Most times, I jest sits 'round an' recollects de good times I done had in my life. Dey ain't nothin' much fo' me to do 'ceptin' jest sit around an' wait fo' de Lo'd to call me home. I don't nevah have to do no work 'cause I'se 'most eighty years ole. Dat's purty ole to be as pert an I is, ain't it.?"

Library of Congress

"I wants to write to my frien's in A'lanta sometimes, but I'se ashamed to let 'em know where I is, after all I used to have when I knowed 'em. An' don't you'all write nothin' 'bout me dat'll tell 'em where I is.....ole an' broke, down here in de County Home....."